



Partnerships in Action

USDA – NRCS Partnership History & Management of Golden Winged Warbler Habitat In Vermont.

By: Dave Adams

Vermont Fish and Wildlife
Department



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To protect and conserve our fish, wildlife, plants and their habitats for the people of Vermont

- Habitat decline, loss and fragmentation are big issues in VT.
 - Roughly 75-80% of the state is privately owned
 - Working with these landowners are key to successful habitat management.





Partnership History



- Over 10 year agreement history with NRCS
 - Agreement signed in 2004 to provide technical assistance to NRCS and Private Landowners.
- Agreements/partnerships with VTFPR and NRCS to increase habitats impacted and landowner involvement
 - A 2010 agreement brought on 2 NRCS foresters to help expand management opportunities in forested settings.





Habitat Impacted

- In the last 10 years, VTFWD and NRCS:
 - Implemented over 1,200 wildlife and forestry contracts with:
 - Over 2,500 acres of early succssional habitat created/enhanced
 - Over 72,000 Crop/Mast/Apple Trees released
 - Over 4,000 Acres of Invasive plant control implemented



Practice Highlights

- Mast Tree Release for increased fruit and nut production.
- Invasive Species / brush management
- Early Successional Habitat Development
 - Patch cutting / grinding with heavy equipment
 - Brush hogging for invasive control and structure development



History Of Golden Winged Warblers in Vermont



- Golden Winged Warblers found in the lower part of the Champlain Valley in Shrubby Upland Habitat
- Heavy Agricultural Demands, Development Encroachment, and Maturing of habitat have lead to a decline in quality nesting and foraging habitat



WHIP and Golden Winged Warblers

- Special USDA NRCS WHIP was implemented to provide funding and support for habitat management practices for GWW
- A Flyover was done by VT Audubon along the VELCO transmission line to assess possible Shrubland habitat and
- VT Audubon Surveys and GWW Initiative information sent to potential LO along the transmission line.
- A total of 6 GWW projects were funded in VT in 2013



Berlin Project ~ Charlotte Vermont

Meg Berlin GWW project 11.11.13



- Located in the Champlain Valley adjacent other GWW habitat projects
- Landowner was engaged in managing her land for wildlife and was interested in Shrubland bird habitat
- Vermont Audubon Bird Assessment and biologist support helped with the project
- USDA NRCS and VTFWD developed a habitat plan and secured funding to support the habitat work on site.
- VTFWD worked with local grinding contractor to get the work completed.

Project Highlights



- Area was flagged by VT Audubon and VTFWD to identify important shrubs and to maintain the structure of the area throughout the grinding phase



- Biologist worked with local contractors during the process to ensure that habitat goals were met

Outcomes



- A total of 7 acres of habitat created
- Bird Survey's done in spring 2014 to evaluate habitat success.
- Follow up management of light brush hogging, invasive control will be done to maintain the habitat

VT Audubon Priority Birds observed on site:
Eastern Towhee, Field Sparrow,
Golden/Blue-winged Warbler hybrid, and
Eastern Whip-poor-will

Many others including: Common
Yellowthroat, Great Crested Flycatcher,
Yellow Warbler, and Gray Catbird



Butler Project ~ Fair Haven, Vermont

Wendy Butler Cert Map 2.5.14



- Located in Addison County, in an area with heavy agriculture and limited habitat management
- Very willing and engaged landowners interested in both Shrubland Bird habitat and associated game habitat benefits.
- Good evidence of priority birds on site, and in the surrounding area
- NRCS, VT Audubon, and VTFWD assessed the site for habitat value, and NRCS worked to secure project funding.
- Once funded VTFWD worked with contractor and landowners to complete the work planned for this project.

Project Highlights

- Again area was flagged and biologist were on site with contactors to identify the goals of the project was met
- Wintertime work ensured good regeneration and limited wildlife impact
- Larger equipment allowed for bigger material to be managed.



- Snags, downed logs, apple trees, and shrub islands were all left for habitat value



Outcomes

- Over 7 acres of Shrubland habitat impacted
- Regeneration in the spring showed good shrub development and invasive species in controllable condition
- Future management to control invasives and manage open areas with mowing

VT Audubon Priority Birds observed on site:

Wood Thrush, Scarlet Tanager, and Eastern Towhee

Many others including: Hermit Thrush, Tufted Titmouse, Great Crested Flycatcher, Gray Catbird, and Alder Flycatcher



Next Steps in Habitat Management



- Continued bird monitoring will be done to determine habitat success and use by priority bird species
- Use of play back calls and decoys to determine the presence of Golden Winged Warblers on site.
- Invasive species control will be implemented to encourage native plants within the treatment areas



Conclusion

- Solid working partnerships have been key to creating high quality Golden Winged Warbler habitat in Vermont.
- By working with Federal, State, and Local partners, high quality projects are moved through the contracting process quickly and efficiently.
- Continued partnerships and landowners participation will be the key to future management opportunities.

